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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 February 2004, at 11 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Annan (Secretary-General)
Chairman: Mr. Aisi ..... (Papua New Guinea)

Contents

Opening of the session by the Secretary-General

Adoption of the agenda

Election of officers

Organization of work

Other matters

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Opening of the session by the Secretary-General

1. **The Temporary Chairman** said that he was pleased to be opening the 2004 session of the Special Committee. While the previous year had been an active one for the Special Committee, there was still a lot to be done to fulfil the requirements of the United Nations Charter and General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV), which contained the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the principles that should guide the decolonization process.

2. During the previous year, the Special Committee had consulted with some of the administering Powers on a series of actions that would trigger a process of decolonization within the current decade in the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories remaining on the Special Committee's list. He welcomed that development and hoped that the process would continue in full partnership with the administering Powers, as well as with the active participation of the peoples of the Territories. The aim must be to promote their political, economic and social development, and to determine the final status of each Territory within the framework of the three options envisaged in resolution 1541 (XV): free association, integration with another State, or independence.

3. He was pleased to note that there had been further progress in the programme of work for Tokelau. The people of the Territory continued to work closely with the administering Power to reach agreements that would guide their future relationship and would determine the final status of Tokelau to the satisfaction of all concerned.

4. He was also glad that, during 2003, the annual decolonization seminar had been held, for the first time, in one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the Caribbean island of Anguilla. He complimented the Government of Anguilla, as well as the United Kingdom, the administering Power, and the former Chairman of the Special Committee, Mr. Huntley, on breaking new ground in that way.

5. Colonialism was an anachronism in the twenty-first century. He therefore hoped that, in the year ahead, all administering Powers would work with the Special Committee, and with the peoples in the Territories under their administration, to find ways to further the decolonization process. Decolonization was a United Nations success story, but it was a story that was not yet finished. He stood ready to provide his support to the Committee and wished it success in the coming year.

Adoption of the agenda

6. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

7. *Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea) was elected Chairman, Mr. Okio (Republic of Congo) and Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) were elected Vice-Chairmen, and Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur, by acclamation.*

8. *Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea) took the Chair.*

9. **The Chairman** expressed the Special Committee's appreciation for the Secretary-General's statement and for his continued support for the cause of decolonization. He welcomed the delegations of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and looked forward to their contributions to the Special Committee. He noted that the delegation of Kazakhstan had indicated its wish to participate, as an Observer, in the opening meeting of the Committee.

10. The Special Committee had been the conduit through which the United Nations had assisted the people in the Non-Self-Governing Territories to determine their political future without external interference. In adopting resolutions and decisions, in making recommendations and in listening to petitions, the Special Committee had worked to end colonialism. He was pleased to note that the Committee had been quite active during the past several years, and that it had started taking positive action by means of an innovative work programme. A lot of work remained to be done, however, and the Committee must continue its work in a proactive, dynamic and innovative manner in order to bring about meaningful results.

11. Informal dialogue with some administering Powers had turned into formal cooperation with encouraging results. Tokelau had been closely cooperating with New Zealand to guide their future relationship and to determine the final status of the Territory to the satisfaction of all concerned. New Zealand had treated the Committee as a helpful partner

in leading Tokelau towards decolonization. The participation of the United Kingdom in the previous year's Seminar in Anguilla, as well as the subsequent contacts with the former Chairman, had reflected a willingness for a constructive engagement with the Committee. He hoped other administering Powers would follow suit and engage in real cooperative collaboration with the Committee.

12. The Special Committee needed to intensify its work to implement various resolutions and recommendations to eradicate colonialism, as the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was now in its fourth year. It must accelerate its work, making it more dynamic, more relevant and more proactive, and must seek to engage the administering Powers and the peoples of the Territories. The 2004 seminar on decolonization, which would take place in the Pacific region, would offer an opportunity to discuss many issues relating to decolonization, to focus on the specific issues pertaining to the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific region, and to hear the concerns of representatives of the Territories, as well as the opinions of experts.

13. The previous year's Seminar in Anguilla had set important precedents in two respects. With the consent of the administering Power, the United Kingdom, the Seminar had been held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory for the first time. Furthermore, also for the first time, the United Kingdom had participated formally in the Seminar and had engaged in a direct dialogue with representatives of the Territories under its administration and with members of the Committee. He hoped that the Committee would be able to count on the formal participation and cooperation of other administering Powers in future seminars and in the work of the Committee. He also looked forward to the constructive participation of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to determine their final status within the framework of the three options advocated by the Special Committee: free association, integration with another State, or independence.

Organization of work (A/AC.109/2004/L.1 and A/AC.109/2004/L.2*)

14. **The Chairman** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/AC.109/2004/L.1, in which he drew the attention of the Special Committee to the resolutions and decisions relevant to its work for the current year. The Committee also had before it for consideration document A/AC.109/2004/L.2*, which contained the Chairman's suggestions regarding the organization of the work of the Committee and its programme of work and timetable. Every effort would be made to conclude the work of the Committee, as scheduled, on 25 June 2004, so that the Committee's reports could be made available to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

15. **Mr. Requeijo Gual** (Cuba) said that, as Vice-Chairman, he would work in close collaboration with the Committee, the administering Powers and the Non-Self-Governing Territories so that continued progress could be made and new possibilities could be explored, with a view to ending the last vestiges of colonialism.

16. **Mr. Okio** (Congo) said that the inclusion of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would make a significant contribution to the work of the Committee, and noted that document A/AC.109/2004/L.1 explicitly laid out the Special Committee's mandate and duties. He drew particular attention to resolution 58/111, in which the General Assembly requested the Committee to finalize, by the end of 2004, a constructive programme of work on a case-by-case basis for the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The full cooperation of the administering Powers and the peoples of the Territories was needed, and it was important to make progress during the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, so that decolonization would become a reality for people living under domination.

17. **Ms. Pulido Santana** (Venezuela) welcomed Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to membership in the Special Committee, and expressed her belief that the Committee would contribute to the completion of the process of decolonization throughout the world. The Committee, whose work had received broad recognition, had made significant progress in the area of human rights.

18. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Chairman of the Special Committee and the country he represented, Papua New Guinea, would once again play an important part in achieving the mandate entrusted to the Special Committee by the international community. Welcoming Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to membership in the Special Committee, he said that their delegations would give

fresh impetus to the work of the Committee. He called upon the administering Powers to cooperate fully with the Committee so that it could reach its goal of eradicating colonialism.

19. **Mr. Severin** (Saint Lucia) said that there was no alternative to the basic right to self-determination and that political equality remained an essential prerequisite for the remaining territories to achieve complete self-government. Under the Chairmanship of Mr. Julian Hunte, the Committee had affirmed the importance of implementing the plan of action of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, especially with respect to scholarly studies, given the importance of periodic analyses for raising the awareness of Member States about the current dependency arrangements. He regretted that such analyses had never been carried out, even though research was part of the international plan of action adopted by the General Assembly.

20. Mr. Huntley, the previous Chairman of the Special Committee, had more recently succeeded in engaging the two main administering Powers to participate in the work of the Committee, albeit informally, with the aim of securing their return to formal cooperation. His delegation looked forward to the day when the administering Powers would be formally involved in the work of the Special Committee, as envisaged by the General Assembly.

21. His delegation firmly believed that the analysis and exchange of information must remain central to the Committee's deliberations if it was to move from the mere adoption of resolutions towards their implementation.

22. Expressing his delegation's full support for the work of the Committee, he commended the historic leadership role that the delegation of Papua New Guinea had played in the Committee at critical moments, and said that its current chairmanship was a further extension of the commitment of the Government of Papua New Guinea to the righteous cause of self-determination.

23. **Mr. Richardson** (Saint Kitts and Nevis) said that, as one of the newest members of the Committee, his delegation was eager to learn from more seasoned colleagues about territorial arrangements in all regions and looked forward to contributing to the promotion of self-determination for all Non-Self-Governing Territories. His country was a small island developing State and a former Non-Self-Governing Territory once constitutionally linked to Anguilla. It therefore maintained close ties with Anguilla and other such Territories and was particularly interested in their future development. Many nationals of the Non-Self-Governing Territories belonging to the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, of which his Government was a member, including Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands and Montserrat, had worked and lived in Saint Kitts and Nevis for generations, and many nationals of his country had likewise worked and lived in those Territories. Alexander Hamilton, who was born in Saint Nevis and spent many formative years in Saint Croix, United States Virgin Islands, before travelling to the United States to pursue his illustrious political career, served as eloquent testimony to the long-standing bonds among the Territories and States of the region. In conclusion, he said that his delegation stood ready to participate actively in the work of the Committee to ensure that the interests of the people of the Non-Self-Governing States were fully represented.

24. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda) drew particular attention to the pioneering role that the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis themselves had played in the independence movement. What the British had termed the "disturbance" in Saint Kitts in 1935 had sparked other movements, for example in Saint Vincent in 1936, Guyana in 1937 and Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Jamaica in 1938 and 1939. Saint Kitts had also shown others how to budget their meagre economies. Saint Kitts and Nevis, a pioneer in the process of decolonization, was rightfully seated on the Special Committee.

25. The Special Committee was the key United Nations mechanism for developing measures to achieve absolute political equality for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories consistent with the three legitimate status options of independence, free association and integration with another State. One such measure was the call for political education programmes to increase awareness about political alternatives and the implications of choices made. The Committee must address the existing information deficit in the Territories on the relevance of the decolonization process to their development. He regretted that there was no follow-up mechanism to build on the successes of the regional seminars,

especially since he had received several calls from the leaders of Non-Self-Governing Territories to hold open town hall meetings such as those in Anguilla and, previously, the Cayman Is' nds.

26. Because the Committee, in its turn, continued to operate with less than adequate knowledge about the situation on the ground, his delegation proposed that briefings should be organized to discuss new developments since the Anguilla Seminar. His Government was ready to take an active part in the work of the Committee to promote self-determination and the decolonization process.

27. **Mr. Jenie** (Indonesia) said that according to the Constitution of Indonesia, all nations had the right to independence. Accordingly, his Government was fully committed to finding a comprehensive solution to matters relating to the self-determination of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. Echoing the words of the Secretary-General, he said it was time to close the colonial chapter of history. Indeed, time was short before the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism expired. The decision by the United Kingdom to hold the regional seminar in Anguilla, one of the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories, was a positive development. Recalling that, at the inception of the United Nations, the administering Powers had undertaken, in accordance with the Charter, to ensure that the Territories enjoyed an appropriate level of self-government, his delegation emphasized the need for further dialogue with those Powers. The regional Seminar in Anguilla had provided an excellent opportunity for such cooperation and he looked forward to the forthcoming seminar in Papua New Guinea.

28. **Mr. Ortiz Gandarillas** (Bolivia) welcomed Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to membership in the Special Committee. Their experience would greatly contribute to the effectiveness of its work. The presence of the Secretary-General at the meeting and his statement showed that the United Nations continued to be active in the promotion of self-determination and decolonization. He shared the sentiment expressed by others that there was an urgent need to complete the work of the Committee with respect to the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories before the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and to implement the programme of action adopted by the General Assembly without delay.

29. He drew particular attention to the fundamental need to make the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories aware of United Nations objectives regarding decolonization and of their political options. In Anguilla and Tokelau, for example, such awareness was greatly lacking. The Committee must therefore focus greater attention on education and increasing public awareness.

30. Lastly, with regard to Tokelau, he wished to highlight the broad and transparent cooperation that his delegation had witnessed both in the Non-Self-Governing Territory and at Headquarters in New York between the Government of New Zealand, Tokelau and the Special Committee.

31. **Mr. Diarra** (Mali), said that his Government, which was an active participant in the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, was fully committed to the objective of universal decolonization. He called on Member States, particularly the administer Powers, to cooperate fully with the Special Committee and to facilitate the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations relating to decolonization. He welcomed Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to membership in the Special Committee; they would make a positive contribution to the emancipation of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Committee could also count on his delegation's full support to that end.

32. **Ms. Ferrari** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) said that, since her country had recently made the painful transition from colonization to independence, its experience should be useful to the Special Committee.

33. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Special Committee had reached a critical point in its history. The presence of the Secretary-General at the meeting indicated the importance which the United Nations placed on decolonization. The Caribbean regional Seminar and the visit to Tokelau also showed the importance of its work. He called on the administering Powers to show the political will to help the Special Committee to fulfil its mandate.

34. **Mr. Savva** (Fiji) stressed that the administering Powers should continue to lend a helping hand to emerging countries, as the period of transition following independence could be turbulent.

35. **Mr. Stanislaus** (Grenada) said that decolonization represented one of the greatest accomplishments of the United Nations. He urged the Non-Self-Governing Territories to reflect carefully about their options before reaching a decision on their future status.

36. **Mr. Mackay** (New Zealand) said that the increase in the membership of the Special Committee was gratifying and would add to the richness of the dialogue. The recent visiting mission to Tokelau, of which New Zealand was the administering Power, had demonstrated the commitment of all parties — Tokelau, New Zealand and the Special Committee — to move the process forward, although it was the people of Tokelau who would ultimately decide their own future. The Special Committee was not an anachronism, but his Government would like to see it become one through the completion of its task.

37. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Committee wished to approve the organization of work.

38. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

39. **The Chairman** said that, as in previous years, the Special Committee would strictly apply the decision of the General Assembly concerning the observance of a quorum. Meetings would be convened without the presence of the quorum required under rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. The presence of a majority of the members would be required for any decisions to be taken.

40. His Government had offered to host the Pacific regional seminar, and he requested authorization from the Committee to hold consultations as appropriate on the preparations for the seminar. In accordance with established practice, he would hold consultations with the Bureau of the Committee, who in turn would consult with members from the respective regional groups.

41. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.